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Not all in the same boat: identitarian undifferentiation in environmental eschatology

Federica Dalla Costa[1]

Abstract

This essay critically examines the rhetorical references and cultural/aesthetic representations framing the human predicament in the face of environmental catastrophe as an ecumenical craft. Through an analysis of the millenarian discourse encapsulated in the phrase "being in the same boat" in relation to doomsday scenarios, I critique the implicit narrative of a shared humanity that emerges in the distribution of environmental harms and risks. I argue that identity dissolution reinforces social stratifications while co-opting the rhetoric of cooperation. I provide the metaphor of the boat, rather than serving as a symbol of refuge, embodies entrenched social hierarchies, from the environmental normativity inherent in Malthusian lifeboat ethics to various depictions in climate fiction (cli-fi) and eco-fascist rhetoric. As apocalyptic thinking becomes increasingly prominent, I analyze discursive approaches surrounding existential risks, revealing how they reflect a Social Darwinist eco-survivalism that seeks to secure a place in a limited-seating vessel for the privileged.

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Environmental apocaphilia: eco-theistic crime and punishment

The post-war period has borne witness to a widespread *momentum* of apocalypticism in Western imagination, sealed as an interpretative lens through which existential risks are collectively articulated. Amid precarious landscapes of human habitation – self-jeopardized by nuclear omnicide, biological warfare, and technological singularity – intellectual discourse and aesthetic representation have enveloped narratives steeped in thermo-industrial civilizational collapse. Nowadays more than ever, man finds himself at a critical juncture as the Doomsday Clock ticks at just 90 seconds to midnight[2] – i.e., human-made global catastrophe. And above all, it is ecological breakdown that serves as the time's indelible omen of the human predicament, with echoes of impending (e)collapse resounding among the prophesying of collapsologists,[3] climate doomers, and a truly greening dystopian cli-fi genre. The specter of fatalistic ecocide, bearer of biotic crisis (a man-driven sixth mass extinction – or, "Anthropocene extinction"), even points toward the ultimate bind of demise:

[1] University of Milan.
[2] Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, "A moment of historic danger."
[3] Servigne and Stevens, *Comment Tout Peut S'effondrer.*

the potential annihilation of the human race itself.

Théodore Géricault, Le Radeau de La Méduse *(The Raft of the Medusa), 1819. Oil on canvas. Louvre, Paris.*

Already in the 90s, pioneer of ecocriticism Lawrence Buell singled out the apocalypse as a "master metaphor" within contemporary environmental imagination.[4] Eco-apocalypse storytelling has indeed shepherded Western sensibility, dating back to the very seminal piece that catalyzed its environmentalist movement, Rachel Carson's "A fable for tomorrow" from *Silent Spring* (1962).[5] Since, this narrative vein of "quasi-religious register of death and doom"[6] has solidified visions of end of times.[7] Such green eschatology parallels classic motifs of divine judgment and retribution, akin to the deluge in *The Book of Genesis* – a not wholly figurative symbol for rising sea levels threatening coastal and low-lying regions with potential submersion. Likewise, the literature draws upon a diverse array of religious and mythological references of doom presage: St. John's four horsemen of the apocalypse (Aldo Leopold), the Day of Judgment (William Vogt), the Day of Atonement (Fairfield Osborn), and the biblical Flood (Georg Borgström)[8] among the many. In this semi-secular "green millenarianism,"[9] not God but Nature "herself" emerges as the authority punishing humanity for its transgressions: the all-presiding, anthropomorphized Gaia – deity of what Bron Taylor's classifies as Gaian spiritualism or naturalism[10] – who is posited to exercise a form of eco-theistic justice in avenging human *hybris*. Thus, the themes of crime against nature and the consequent "revenge of Gaia"[11] recur frequently throughout environmental biocentric literature, common wisdom, and popular culture, from *The Day After Tomorrow* (20024) to *The Age of Stupid* (2009), wherein "there is a clear sense that destruction is deserved as a punishment for past sins."[12]

Certain "repenting" in certain radical fringes environmentalists have actually embraced civilizational collapse for the sake of ecological renewal. Quoting directly from the *Book of the Apocalypse*, Ted Kaczynski wrote, "the revolution that anarcho-primitivists hope will overthrow civilization corresponds to the Day of Judgment (Revelation 18:2)."[13] Furthermore, even the outright extinction of the species may be regarded as sacral duty to Gaia; such is the programmatic goal articulated by the self-proclaimed "anti-human" religious organization Church of Euthanasia. The

[4] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 285.
[5] Carson, *Silent Spring*.
[6] Ereaut and Segnit, "'Warm words," 7.
[7] The Greek term Apocalypse refers to the final book of the *Bible*, *Revelation*, which depicts Saint John's vision of the end of the world and the Last Judgement.
[8] Linnér, *The Return of Malthus*, 99.
[9] Heyward and Rayner, "Apocalypse nicked!," 5.
[10] Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*.
[11] Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia*.
[12] Hammond and Breton, "Eco-Apocalypse," 110.
[13] Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 170.

strong misanthropy and anti-humanism of such branches has even come to penetrate mainstream strands, as shown most recently during the 2020 lockdown; at the time, environmental activists circulated online that "Coronavirus is Earth's Vaccine. We're the virus," equating social catastrophe (mass loss of human life) with environmental benefits,[14] or a providential divine cleanse from Mother Earth.

However, beyond these nihilistic tendencies, apocalyptic-thinking compels a story-telling of yearned redemption in face of the approaching day of judgment. Then, amid existential – perhaps extinctional – dread narratives, a metaphor pervades collective cultural responses: the construction of mankind as standing in a last, shared vessel in face of Nature's wrath. The imagery of humanity being, specifically, "in the same boat," is used to foster ethical proximity and creates a sense of interconnectedness, as humanity is both sinner and the bearer of the divine scourge.

From the Ark to the lifeboat: the ethical shipwreck of (un)differentiation

Reminiscing of Noah's Ark amidst relentless deluge, the image of the ship as shelter to eco-apocalyptic prospects has taken roots in collective imagination, bolstered by its recurrent reference through environmental storytelling. This trope underscores mankind's role as ethical stewardship in the quest for ultimate salvation and, accordingly, functions as a strong rhetorical device. Hence, the symbolic framing of Earth as a craft constantly appears in policymakers' speeches, tabloid accounts (the reference to "the Earth as a boat" has been documented 53 times from 1984 to 2021 across these media only[15]), activists' call to action, as for Extinction Rebellion's pink boat, as well as within contemporary artworks like Banksy's.[16] Likewise, environmental dilemmas are metaphorically depicted as evocative ethical floods and storms (most famously by Stephen Gardiner[17]).

On one hand, Ark-derivative figures underscore humanity's precarious plight and, on the other, they serve as a rallying cry for collective responsibility and remedial endeavor. Contrasting the divisiveness and politicized polarization surrounding eco-debates, they evoke an irrefutable anchoring of individuals to each other once met with irremediable catastrophe. Accordingly, the narrative of ethical steering serves as a two-fold rationale: first, it implies an all-encompassing accountability that the universalized *Anthropos* bears for ecological upheaval – consistently with the Anthropocene storytelling; second, it lays out the necessity for a united human front in a getaway from apocalypse's fallout. That is, the emergence of an ethos in which humanity must shed identarian frictions as catastrophe collapses normative hierarchies and abolishes specificity. Echoing the scriptures of divine punishment for collective earthly sins, this removal of individual identity leads in fact to an outbreak of identarian indifference – that equalizes distinctions of wealth, disintegrates kinship entitlement, and dismantles whatsoever hierarchical relationships – ultimately leading to an implosion of societal structures.

In his seminal work, "The climate of history," Dipesh Chakrabarty defined environmental dislocation and climate change

[14] Examples of the penetration of this trope in mainstream media are truly extensive. See, for instance, Goldman-Wetzler, "The gifts of the Coronavirus," and Klare, "Is the COVID-19 pandemic mother nature's response to human transgression?"
[15] Augé, "We are in the same storm, not in the same boat," 336.
[16] Banksy, *We're all on the same boat*.
[17] Gardiner, "A perfect moral storm."

precisely as global leveling mechanisms. All of humanity, as universal species, is bound to face them as "the effects of our actions as a species"; he argues, "there are no boats here for the rich and the privileged."[18] According to this prophetic utterance, the elite are not less vulnerable to Mother Earth's fury as the poor they historically exploited. Proverbial wisdom of such kind, then, crystallizes into the ultimate dictum: no hiding places or safe zones, either "we sink or swim together."[19]

However, the identitarian undifferentiation inherent in the ecumenic "we" of the same-boat metaphor blatantly overlooks the varying vulnerabilities to ecological catastrophes experienced at different levels of society. Additionally, the obscurantism underlying narratives of a shared humanity aim at promoting a universalized – yet, not universal – "general good" or "the good of the species," while concealing acute exclusion brought about in doing so. With this regard, this essay contends that the boat figure does not serve as a symbol of refuge; rather, it embodies and perpetuates the very hierarchical dominance it rhetorically pretends to dissolve. Furthermore, the normative ramifications of this narrative forge a sacrificial ethics in which mankind survival warrants leaving some behind. Already in *Genesis*, the Ark symbolizes shelter from elimination for the living species, inclusive of humankind, yet not for individuals themselves; the preservation of divine creation is realized through a triage – a providential purge of the wicked and sinful. The very allegory is framed around a symbol of inherent limitation, as the space within the Ark is finite and cannot accommodate everyone. This suggests a significant connection between the craft and a heuristic of salvation as a finite resource.

The vessel metaphor, indeed, must be contextualized within an historical shift in collective sensibility, as the fabric of the concertedly perceived relationship with nature has transitioned – from a bygone era of supposed abundance to an increasingly stark realization of natural limits. The relentless crescendo of twentieth-century concern about ecological depletion has irreversibly reshaped Western environmental paradigms, with natural assets that were once thought to be virtually limitless – for which the Lockean rationale of leaving "enough-and-as-good" for others was sufficient[20] – carved out as the absent reference. Specifically, naturalized resource scarcity becomes the key conceptual pivot and fuel for eco-dystopian fears. Scholarly literature has in fact identified scarcity as the unifying thread of environmental apocalypticism[21], encompassing shortages of energy, food, water, air, and even habitable space. This "not-enough-for-all" storytelling is the conceptual framework from which the vessel concept surfaces.

In his 1966 essay, "The economics of the coming spaceship earth,"[22] Kenneth Boulding inaugurated this discourse by introducing the craft symbolism in the mainstream. He posited a structural transition: from a reckless "cowboy economy" belonging to the past, to the recognition that the "era of seemingly endless resources is over," coining the term "spaceman economy" to reflect planetary limited resource pool. The idea of Earth as a single spaceship running short of everything recurred increasingly in the following period, during which collective consciousness was

[18] Chakrabarty, "The climate of history," 221.
[19] Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment*, 176.
[20] Singer, "One atmosphere," 187.
[21] See, for instance, Harrison, "Ecological apocalypse," 103, and Heise, "The planetary futures of eco-apocalypse," 275.
[22] Boulding, "The economics of the coming spaceship earth."

clouded under a peril of penury, especially in the US. Scarcity anxieties were channeled in particular by the surge of neo-Malthusian pessimism, often referred to as the "Malthusian moment" of environmentalism (Robertson)[23] – catastrophic projections of ecological collapse stemming from mid-20th century baby boom. This era saw the rise of cautionary narratives, such as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968)[24], Garrett Hardin's "The tragedy of the commons" (1968)[25], and the Club of Rome's report *The Limits to Growth* (1972)[26], against doomsday scenarios threatened by an "overpopulated" Earth.[27] This climate of resource anxiety intensified with the U.S. oil crisis of 1973 and the energy crisis of 1979 triggered by geopolitical turmoil – the Yom Kippur War and the Iranian Revolution, respectively – solidifying a collective fear of scarcity, paradigmatically illustrated by the haunting November 1973 *Newsweek* cover that depicted Uncle Sam clutching an empty cornucopia, reading "Running out of everything."[28] Such is the mood reflected in dirty and cramped spaces depicted by literary and cinematic productions; overcrowded rooms, packed streets, and full ships served as visual symbols of limited space, limited places. "Overpopulation" emerged, accordingly, as the absolute overriding theme of science fiction imagination at the time, even delineating a new dystopian genre or "demodystopias,"[29] within which fierce competition reigns for the few remaining resources and where totalitarian regimes resort to extreme measures of population control as the last hope for the survival of the human race; in *Z.P.G.: Zero Population Growth* (1972) the world government punishes by death those who violate the ban on reproduction and similarly, *Soylent Green* (1973), adapted from Harry Harrison's 1966 novel *Make Room! Make Room!*, depicts cannibalism as the final resort to feed a bustling humanity.[30] On the whole, the dreaded term of limits rapidly became the global watchword of the times.[31] And precisely in 1972, the year *The Limits to Growth* was published, NASA released the "Blue Marble" photograph of the planet as seen from Apollo 17. This picture crystallized "Earth's frailty, vulnerability, and isolation suspended in the vast expanse of space,"[32] effectively marking a definitive cultural transition from an open to a closed Earth imaginary. Such visual laid bare the world's finite nature and urged humankind to ask itself – in Ehrlich's words – "What is the capacity of Earth to support people?"[33]

Precisely leveraging on the concept of planetary carrying capacity, Ehrlich likened the planet to an overcrowded "fragile craft" – spaceship Earth – running out of essential supplies. He acknowledged the broader historical responsibility of saving the spaceship that rests on the "first-class

[23] Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment*.
[24] Ehrlich and Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*.
[25] Hardin, "The tragedy of the commons."
[26] Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth*.
[27] With regard to the pseudo-supernaturalistic dimension of Malthusianism, see Murray Bookchin's critique of "mystical Malthusianism" or "New Age Malthusianism," in "The population myth: Part I - The population myth: Part II," 8.
[28] Newsweek, 1973.
[29] Domingo, " 'Demodystopias'."
[30] This genre is no less prolific today; see, for instance, *Inferno* (2016), *Downsizing* (2017), *Ready Player One* (2018), *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), and *Humane* (2024), among others.
[31] Basosi, "I «limiti» di Jimmy Carter," 265.
[32] Morris, "Our Blue Marble."
[33] Ehrlich and Ehrlich, *Population, Resources, Environment*, 59.

passengers"; however, he argues that the solution lies in a drastic reduction of the craft's crew size. This firm population control strategy envisioned by Ehrlich (both in ODCs, "overdeveloped countries," and UDCs, "underdeveloped countries" especially),[34] advocates for a quantitative reduction grounded in programmatic anti-natalism specifically – or neo-Malthusian preventive check.[35] Yet, neo-Malthusianism has also adopted pro-mortalist approaches to human cargo reduction necessary for survival – the positive check. Such radical arguments are paradigmatically represented by Hardin's lifeboat ethics, which champion the subversion of the common ship in the space of a social Darwinist competition for the survival of the fittest (or richest?). In his aptly titled "Lifeboat ethics: The case against helping the poor" (1974),[36] Hardin posits the imperative of acknowledging the limited seating in humanity's Ark. Rejecting the "Spaceship Earth" analogy dangerous justification for "suicidal policies for sharing our resources through uncontrolled immigration and foreign aid," he categorically advocates for an even stricter ethical framework based on explicit exclusion – the "harsh ethics of the lifeboat."[37] In the book, the welfare of those who already have seats secured is defended at the expense and leaving the weak behind – aiding who would otherwise destabilize the precarious flotation of humanity's "collective" vessel. The scenario unfolds as follows: the wealthy are seated on a few lifeboats while the poor (developing countries) drift in the ocean alongside, pleading for berth. Hardin's normative is that seating them would overweight and thus sink the lifeboat. This leads to a grim, zero-sum conclusion: leaving the poor to drown is the only viable option to ensure the survival of the elite already aboard. In his view, "in a world of limits, we must ultimately limit the number of lives we attempt to save."[38]

In a return to a misanthropic, Earth-centric spirituality, this view translates to the interpretation of demographic checks – such as famines and diseases – as Gaia's defense mechanisms and deserved punishment. And when examined through the political economy's content of Malthusian theory, this perspective reveals a threefold parallelism encompassing religion, environmentalism, and capitalism. In this framework, the Ark serves as a tacit symbol of the genealogy of "a chosen people," situated within a self-correcting and intelligent design whether attributed to divine agency, Nature, or a Smithian-like invisible hand.[39] Angela Mitropoulos's coined the concept of "lifeboat capitalism" precisely to express this very notion of selective salvation and hierarchical renewal through catastrophic tribulation[40]; survival is commodified in this

[34] Ehrlich and Harriman, *How to Be a Survivor.*
[35] Note that Boulding was also concerned with demographic containment of the "crew," e.g., his proposal for state-regulated, marketable licenses for babies.
[36] Hardin, "Lifeboat ethics."
[37] Hardin developed his normative stance, based on "living with with death, competition, and triage" in his 1989 book *Promethean Ethics.*
[38] Review excerpt from cover's jacket of Hardin, *Promethean Ethics.*
[39] See, for instance, David Foreman, deep ecology activist and founder of Earth First!, who defined mankind as a "humanpox"; he has described the AIDS epidemic as a "welcomed" form of natural population control and suggested that the U.S. government should withhold humanitarian aid in times of famine, arguing it is better to "let people just starve" and allow nature to restore its balance. In this vein, Earth First!'s journal featured contributions like Daniel Connell's piece "Is AIDS the answer to an environmentalist's prayer?" (1987) and "Miss Ann Thropy," with "If AIDS didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent one" (1987).
[40] Mitropoulos, "Lifeboat capitalism, catastrophism, borders.''

exclusionary ideology as a privilege bestowed upon the elite as the result of ruthless natural selection.

While seemingly inspiring a sense of "being in the same boat together" and of dissolution of hierarchy, the craft metaphor thoroughly reverse any unity, promoting a narrative of dog-eat-dog survivalism and triage that draws from stratified capitalistic domination. The very origin of such narrative goes even further back, and, coming as no surprise, its paradigmatic symbolism finds its forefather in cleric Thomas Robert Malthus' refutation of Poor Laws. Contextualized in an historical era where scarcity was specifically equated with a shortage of food, the metaphor employed by the English demographer reflects a sit-down at nature "full table" – ancestor of all spaceships, lifeboats, and overcrowded sites[41] of eco-apocalyptic dystopias. In the revised and extended 1803 edition of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, he writes that for "A man who is born into a world already possessed, […] at nature's mighty feast, there is no vacant cover for him.'' He continues,

> If these guests get up and make room for him, other intruders immediately appear demanding the same favour. The report of a provision for all that come, fills the hall with numerous claimants. The order and harmony of the feast is disturbed, the plenty that before reigned is changed into scarcity; and the happiness of the guests is destroyed by the spectacle of misery and dependence in every part of the hall, and by the clamorous importunity of those, who are justly enraged at not finding the provision which they had been taught to expect. The guests learn too late their error, in counteracting those strict orders to all intruders, issued by the great mistress of the feast, who, wishing that all her guests should have plenty, and knowing that she could not provide for unlimited numbers, humanely refused to admit fresh comers when her table was already full.[42]

This passage signals something more than a purely descriptive notion, as found instead in Darwin's naturalistic observation that "Nature's banquet does not have enough seats for everyone."[43] In Malthus's moral economy not only are the places limited; the point is that *the table is already full*. Clearly, the whole analogy constitutes a complete rebuttal of egalitarian political philosophies, since the "natural" axiom of scarcity precludes subaltern classes from seeking claims that are hitherto assigned. Malthus' full table, Hardin's filled-to-capacity boat, and his metaphor of slamming the door once inside[44], all entail a sacrificial conception of the good that justifies the instrumentalization of individual lives for the sake of "the general good," but the latter reference is ideologically employed as normative justifications for the *status quo* and discriminatory practices at the interests of the capitalist elite.[45] Lifeboat metaphors are revealed as symbols of social exclusion, or, salvation of the elected, rather than collective unity.[46] The ship does not universally extend

[41] Bergthaller and González, "Population, ecology, and the Malthusian imagination,'' 2.
[42] Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1803 ed.), 417-418.
[43] La Vergata, *Guerra e darwinismo sociale*, 40.
[44] Hardin, "Lifeboat ethics."
[45] Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment*, 215.
[46] It's important to clarify that neo-Malthusianism and eco-survivalism are distinct movements that do not necessarily overlap. Eco-survivalism emphasizes "giving-in" to catastrophe, while neo-Malthusian debates primarily focus on the measures required to prevent it. On this difference, see Kant-Rosene and Szwarc, "Preparing for collapse."
[47] Mitropoulos, "Lifeboat capitalism, catastrophism, borders."

refuge to all individuals but advocates for an ideology of "apocalypctic conservatism"[47] that seeks to protect pre-existing entitlements by numerically reducing those considered undesirable. This can happen either through preventive checks or through positive checks. These are, respectively, a reduction of natality rates, as "procreation today is the moral equivalent of selling berths on a sinking ship,"[48] or, instead, an increase in mortality rates. As articulated by eco-fascist Pentti Linkola, when the lifeboat reaches capacity, "those who love and respect life" – a phrase evidently referencing the abstract notion of the collective good rather than individual lives – "will take the ship's axe and cut the too many hands clinging to the sides of the boat."[49]

As Hardin's lifeboat works as rebuttal to humanitarian aid and open-door immigration policies, likewise in eco-apocalypse heuristics the ecological concept of "natural boundaries" is frequently parallel to the one of "borders" and its xenophobic implications (implicitly or explicitly, e.g., eco-bordering). Ironically, this can manifest involuntarily. For instance, in 2018's Italy, the aesthetic representation of the boat shifted from symbolizing unity to becoming a target of far-right hostility towards migrants. For the 50th edition of the Barcolana sailing regatta, Marina Abramović created a poster featuring the slogan "We're all in the same boat"[50]; but while her intention was to repurpose the imagery of competing vessels to convey solidarity amidst environmental degradation, the phrase sparked a political uproar among right-wing Lega politicians, who censored the campaign, labeling it as pro-migrant propaganda and an immoral politicization of the event. Moreover, the boat metaphor often embodies consciously and explicitly exclusionary sentiments. Under the guise of identitarian undifferentiation, the imagery of "limited seats" functions as a tool to ideologically frame certain lives or entire populations as surplus. In contrast to Abramović's message, Khaled Sabsabi's installation *Fuck Off We're Full* (2009) serves as a commentary on migration restrictions grounded in anxieties surrounding resource scarcity and demographic pressures. These themes have fueled what Betsy Hartmann refers to as the recent "greening of hate,"[51] in environmental doomism, the weaponization of ecological politics to bolster anti-immigrant agendas, ethnonationalist rhetoric, and even eugenics, culminating in the emergence of eco-fascism. In this context, the ship metaphor – whether associated with the drowning of migrants or the salvation of a select few – has pervaded public discourse. A striking instance occurred in 2020 when a far-right anti-immigrant group "The Hundred-Handers" distributed posters across England reading, "Save the environment – End mass migration" and "Sink the boats – Save the world."[52] These slogans reveal the conflation of xenophobic themes, specifically the belief that resources are being unjustly appropriated from white populations, with concerns about eco-scarcity. The rise of eco-fascist terrorism, epitomized by the 2019 mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand – motivated by fears of "Muslim overpopulation" – exemplifies how such narratives can culminate in violent extremism. Ultimately, the political landscape described by Christian Parenti as the "armed

[48] Quote from pro-extinctionist activist Les U. Knight, founder of Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (VHEM); Knight, "Experience: I campaign for the extinction of the human race."
[49] Linkola, "The doctrine of survival and doctor ethics," 123.
[50] Abramović , *We're all in the same boat* (2018), poster.
[51] Hartmann, "The greening of hate."
[52] The Argus, "'Vile' – fake posters with climate group's logo spotted."
[53] Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos*, 11.

lifeboat"[53] portrays migrants as adversaries, with security mechanisms functioning as tools to protect a privileged few amid the escalating climate crisis.

Connecting back to Chakrabarty's remarks on "boats for the rich," critiques of oversimplification in assessing climatic burden are raised by authors such as Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg. These thinkers challenge the very notion of Anthropocene's causal chronicles, asserting that ecological disruption and climate change are not merely byproducts of human evolution but are deeply rooted in the sociogenic historical structures of capitalism.[54] Accordingly, questions of "Whose Anthropocene?" and "Who is this Anthropos?"[55] rebut to the narrative that Murray Bookchin describes as "gospel of a kind of 'original sin',"[56] which inaccurately blames humanity – as a vague, undifferentiated species – for environmental transgressions conveniently sidelining its social root and capitalistic exacerbation. Likewise, narratives that tend to depict a unified "humanity" facing ecological crises simultaneously – maliciously intended or not – perpetuate existing hierarchies by ignoring the socio-economic disparities that underlie environmental degradation. It is, indeed, vulnerable categories that are the more affected by "eco-theistic justice" storytelling and actual environmental hazards. Against a Girardian notion of chaotic undifferentiation – namely, the collapse of normative hierarchies during times of catastrophe – the ethics of the lifeboat suggests that, in an age of privilege, not everyone is in the same boat.

Social stratification being symbolized by the craft of survival is a recurring theme among eco-dystopias, penetrating even popular imagination. In *2012* (2009), humankind's desperate quest for salvation from a natural apocalypse happens via "the Arks," which boarding tickets are priced at an astronomical 1 billion euros per person. Likewise, in Bong Joon-ho's *Snowpiercer* (2013), the last remnants of humanity are confined to a train eternally circling a frozen, desolate Earth. The vehicle serves as a microcosm of society, showcasing established hierarchies and class divisions amid dwindling resources. Just like the lifeboat metaphor, the train emphasizes shared survival experiences while exposing stark inequalities; affluent passengers in the front enjoy luxury, while those in the tail endure squalor and oppression, sharpened by environmental collapse. These cultural representations ultimately underscore a failed promise of egalitarianism, revealing that survival crafts are predicated on exclusion and exploitation.

These themes are not only pivotal for ecological dystopias and gone-bad planetary futures, but are also paradoxically woven into utopian visions of salvation from ecological disaster. In the long-termist fantasies espoused by silicon-valley billionaires of escaping eco-doom via technology, the same-boat quickly falters, as inextricably tied to elitism and wealth. With the 21st century's rise of existential threats and with eco-survivalism collecting disciples, a distinct phenomenon comes into focus, elite eco-survivalism[57]or Douglas Rushkoff "survival of the riches".[58] In this landscape, the billionaire class prepares for eco-doomsday – crafting plans and infrastructures for their own safe havens – while the rest of society is left to face escalating ecological collapse. Limited seating hark back to trends like luxury bunkers

[54] Malm and Hornborg, "The geology of mankind?," 66.
[55] Colebrook, "We have always been post-Anthropocene," 10.
[56] Bookchin, "Social ecology versus deep ecology," 4.
[57] Rushkoff, *Survival of the Richest.*
[58] Kant-Rosene and Szwarc, "Preparing for collapse," 7.

designed to withstand worst-case scenarios, creating a "user-pay" model for survival, visions for interplanetary escape by Mars colonization, and uploading consciousness to supercomputers to achieve virtual immortality. This focus on transcending earthly limitations emphasizes the stark divide between those who can afford to envision a future beyond ecological disaster and those who remain tethered to the deteriorating conditions of the planet.

Conclusion

This essay collates various scenarios related to the discursive references and cultural and aesthetic representations of the ship: among those, (1) only the elite aboard (e.g., Hardin's lifeboat ethics); (2) same boat but with different classes (e.g., *Snowpiercer*); (3) same storm but different boats (e.g., the disparity between migrant boats and billionaires' superyachts or spaceships, even); and (4) the concept of the boat as surplus to sink (e.g., eco-fascism).

Amid these different conceptual interpretations, the claim that "we're all in the same boat," while suggesting an identitarian dissolution in the face of a collectively doomed fate, fails to convey true equality. Instead, it transforms into a site of conflict and anti-human sentiment, ranging from naïve ignorance to full-fledged hate. Framing the apocalypse as an irreversible ecological sin of humanity leading to selective salvation does little to foster genuine solidarity. Instead of concentrating on quantitative selection – determining who is worthy of survival – the focus should shift toward a qualitative transformation of narratives and collective storytelling, re-enchanting humanity as spoof and critique of divisive misanthropy and survivalist apocalypticism.[59]

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